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Subpart A—General Information

§ 285.1 Purpose.

The purpose of part 285 is to set out procedures and general requirements under which the National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) operates to accredit both calibration laboratories and testing laboratories in response to:

(a) Mandates by the Federal government through legislative or administrative action;

(b) Requests from a government agency (§ 285.13); and

(c) Requests from a private sector organization (§ 285.14).

Supplementary technical and administrative requirements are provided in supporting handbooks and documents as needed depending on the criteria established for specific Laboratory Accreditation Programs (LAPs).

§ 285.2 Organization of procedures.

Subpart A describes considerations which relate in general to all aspects of NVLAP. Subpart B describes how new LAPs are requested, developed, and announced, and how LAPs are terminated. Subpart C describes procedures for accrediting laboratories. Subpart D sets out the conditions and criteria for NVLAP accreditation.

§ 285.3 Description and goal of NVLAP.

(a) NVLAP is a system for accrediting calibration laboratories and testing laboratories found competent to perform specific tests or calibrations. Competence is defined as the ability of a laboratory to meet the NVLAP conditions (§ 285.32) and to conform to the criteria (§ 285.33) in NVLAP publications for specific calibration and test methods.

(b) NVLAP is a process which:

(1) Provides the technical and administrative mechanisms for national and international recognition for competent laboratories based on a comprehensive procedure for promoting confidence in calibration and testing laboratories that show that they operate in accordance with NVLAPs requirements;

(2) Provides laboratory management with documentation for use in the development and implementation of their quality systems;

(3) Identifies competent laboratories for use by regulatory agencies, purchasing authorities, and product certification systems;

(4) Provides laboratories with guidance from technical experts to aid them in reaching a higher level of performance resulting in the generation of improved engineering and product information; and

(5) Promotes the acceptance of calibration and test results between countries, and facilitates cooperation between laboratories and other bodies to assist in the exchange of information and experience, facilitating removal of non-tariff barriers to trade and promoting the harmonization of standards and procedures.

(c) NVLAP is comprised of a series of laboratory accreditation programs (LAPs) which are established on the basis of requests and demonstrated need. The specific calibration and test methods, types of calibration and test methods, products, services, or standards to be included in a LAP are determined by an open process during the establishment of the LAP (see § 285.11). The Chief of NVLAP does not unilaterally propose or decide the scope of a LAP. Communication with other laboratory accreditation systems is fostered to encourage development of common criteria and approaches to accreditation and to promote the domestic, foreign, and international acceptance of test data produced by the accredited laboratories.

[49 FR 44623, Nov. 8, 1984. Redesignated at 59 FR 22745, May 3, 1994, as amended at 64 FR 59617, Nov. 3, 1999]

§ 285.4 References.

NVLAP is designed to be compatible with domestic and foreign laboratory accreditation programs to ensure the universal acceptance of test data produced by NVLAP-accredited laboratories. In this regard, these Procedures are compatible with: